



THE UTSA CARLOS ALVAREZ COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ANNUAL REPORT IS A PUBLICATION FOR ALUMNI, FACULTY, STAFF AND FRIENDS OF THE COLLEGE.



UTSA Carlos Alvarez College of Business
One UTSA Circle
San Antonio, TX 78249
(210) 458 4313

<https://business.utsa.edu>

On the Cover: Dean Jonathon Halbesleben meets with business students Frank Colwell, Melanie Solis, Andrik Hurtado, Emily Herrera, Lianette Gonzalez and Michael Seager.



ADMINISTRATION

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Jonathon Halbesleben
- ASSOCIATE DEAN
UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
Mark T. Leung
- ASSOCIATE DEAN
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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- ASSOCIATE DEAN
ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY
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- ASSISTANT DEAN
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- ASSISTANT DEAN GRADUATE STUDIES
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A Leader’s Journey

Jonathon Halbesleben embarks on a new academic journey as the seventh dean of the Carlos Alvarez College of Business.

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DEAN'S *message*

Leading the Carlos Alvarez College of Business is a unique opportunity to enhance our community through our students, our research and our outreach activities.

Many places provide a high-quality education. Few places have the potential to positively change the trajectory of our students and their communities the way we can here at UTSA and the Alvarez College of Business. That's what drew me to this position. I'm passionate about higher education as a catalyst for social mobility. I look forward to putting that passion into action, working with you to transform the San Antonio business community.

In my first few months as dean, I have had the pleasure of meeting some truly outstanding students and alumni of our college. I've met students working in internships excited about how those experiences led to job offers. I've met alumni working in investment banking firms in New York City who were inspired by their experiences with our Investment Society. I've met students engaging in research experiences that have launched them into prestigious graduate programs across the country. A common thread that links many of our most successful students and alumni are opportunities to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-world experiences, helping them to quickly advance in their careers.

Careers don't start when students graduate; they start when they walk in the doors of the Alvarez College of Business. We are working to ensure significant experiential learning opportunities exist for *all* of our students, and that they have the professional development to make the impact of those activities even more meaningful. You can help us create meaningful learning experiences for our students by sharing your experiences and providing mentorship.

Jonathon Halbesleben

BODENSTEDT CHAIR FOR THE DEAN OF BUSINESS
TOM C. FROST DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY CHAIR
FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE



I've also had the pleasure of getting to know our terrific faculty and staff. Beyond the classroom, they are making significant impact with their research – you can read about just a handful of those impacts in this annual report. It has been a banner year for our research, including new highs in external funding and in the quality of our journal publications. I'm incredibly proud of how we've engaged our students in research to help them develop their critical thinking and analytical skills. Our students aren't just learning about business; they are changing the way we think about business.

And 2023 promises to be another exciting year for the college. Over the next year, we will build up our infrastructure and examine changes to our curriculum that will further support experiential learning and professional development. We are investing in additional faculty and staff to continue to build our capacity for transformative learning and cutting-edge research. We will also be launching new programs to enrich the San Antonio business community, including programs to support local entrepreneurs and executive education offerings.

In closing, thank you for welcoming Jenn, my kids and I to the Alvarez College of Business *familia*. Getting to know our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of the college has confirmed that San Antonio, UTSA and the Alvarez College of Business are truly special places because of their extraordinary people. I look forward to working with you as we build on our strong foundation to provide new opportunities for our students to transform our communities.

BENEFACTORS CARLOS AND MALÚ ALVAREZ RECOGNIZED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

College benefactors Carlos and Malú Alvarez were honored during a celebration this fall for their historical \$20 million gift to the business college that resulted in the naming of the Carlos Alvarez College of Business—the first named college at UTSA.



Greeted by UTSA student ensemble Mariachi Los Paisanos, Carlos Alvarez performed a song with the group before the official ceremony began. In front of an overflowing crowd of students, faculty and business community leaders, UTSA President **Taylor Eighmy** thanked the Alvarez family for their longstanding generosity to UTSA.

"This gift is deeply, deeply important to the trajectory of the university and is profoundly impactful in advancing our student success efforts," said Eighmy. "Even more, because of your generosity, we've been able to establish the \$1 million Alvarez Research Challenge."

Eighmy recognized benefactors **Ann and Charlie Deacon, Walter Embrey, Lou Celia and Don Frost and Nancy and Frank Kudla** for their gifts in support of this challenge.

Jonathon Halbesleben, dean of the Alvarez College of Business, spoke about the impact that the Alvarez gift has had on the college. Due to their support, the college has launched the Alvarez Fellows Undergraduate Research Program to provide experiential research opportunities for students; fund faculty mentors to support students in this program; and promote faculty research excellence.



Business student Jasmin Paquet-Durand Ford presents Carlos Alvarez with a framed print.

"Amor para familia," an original piece of artwork by **Richard Armendariz**, professor of art at UTSA, was unveiled as part of a tribute wall honoring the Alvarizes. The vibrantly-colored piece depicts a ram on canvas and represents the family's strength, tenacity and success.

Upon viewing the piece, Carlos Alvarez exclaimed, "This is not a ram, it is a G.O.A.T.—greatest of all time."

Recognizing this as a defining moment in UTSA's history, Student Government Association President **Jasmin Paquet-Durand Ford** presented Carlos Alvarez with a framed picture of the artwork.

"On behalf of all students, thank you," said Paquet-Durand Ford, a junior economics major in the college. "To have our college named after someone as successful, entrepreneurial and philanthropic as you is truly an honor. You are an inspiration, and I thank you for believing in UTSA and in our students."

Following the celebration, Carlos Alvarez presented the keynote address as part of the Frost Distinguished Lecture Series. "You are the brand, you are the visibility that enhances this institution and makes it greater," he said.

Alvarez founded Gambrinus in 1986 after moving from Mexico to San Antonio. His family-owned company became the U.S. importer for the Grupo Modelo beer brands and for the next 20 years was responsible for selling and marketing one of the most successful brands in contemporary beer history—Corona Extra.

Taking an interest in a local brand, he acquired the Spoetzl Brewery in 1989 and turned it into a leading independent craft brewery with Shiner Bock as its flagship brand. Gambrinus also owns and operates the Trumer Brewery in Berkeley, California.

A prominent community leader, Alvarez is a co-chair of UTSA's Campaign Leadership Council; serves on the boards of Cullen/Frost Bankers Inc., United Way of San Antonio and the World Affairs Council of San Antonio; and is a member of Haven for Hope's Leadership Advisory Council.

The Frost Distinguished Lecture Series, which began in 1988, brings prominent business and community leaders to UTSA to share their knowledge and experiences with students and others in the university and business community.

EMBREY DONATES \$100,000 TO CREW SCHOLARS PROGRAM

San Antonio-based real estate investment company Embrey has donated \$100,000 to the Carlos Alvarez College of Business to endow the Embrey CREW Scholars Program.

“Embrey has been a partner of UTSA for many years, and we are excited to build on this relationship through the CREW Scholars Program,” said **Trey Embrey**, president and CEO of Embrey.

The CREW Scholars program was established in 2015 as a partnership with CREW San Antonio to support the advancement of women pursuing education and careers in commercial real estate.

“Since the program’s inception our goal was to endow the program so it could continue in perpetuity to benefit our students,” said **Tony Ciochetti**, the Elmo James Burke Jr. Chair in Real Estate Finance and Development. “We wanted to be able to recruit more top women into our graduate programs and ultimately the field of commercial real estate.”

Students selected for the program receive an academic scholarship, are paired with a mentor, attend CREW national conferences and board meetings and serve on committees to enhance their professional development in the real estate industry.

“Being involved in groups like CREW connects you with professionals in the local real estate industry. There is a need for women to support other women in this industry,” said **Jenna Stoeltje Stamps**, MBA ’17, the first CREW Scholars student and currently a development manager with Embrey. “The college’s real estate program was vital to starting my career in real estate development.”

Featuring a strong academic foundation and connections with local and global leaders in the real estate industry, the Embrey Real Estate Finance and Development Program emphasizes industry engagement and applied educational activities to help train the next generation of leaders in the real estate industry.

“Embrey is investing in a great program that helps students, the industry and the community,” said Ciochetti. “The support that we’ve received from Embrey over the years as well as Walter and Trey Embrey personally has been unbelievable. It shows that they believe in our vision and are excited about what lies ahead.”



Past CREW Scholars participants are pictured with UTSA program faculty and benefactor Trey Embrey (right).

“It has been very rewarding to see so many excellent students, many who are first-generation college graduates, complete their coursework through the UTSA Embrey Real Estate Finance and Development Program and go on to successful careers,” said Trey Embrey, who is a member of the college’s Founders Council, a real estate advisory board. “Our industry needs these emerging professionals so it can continue to grow. Clearly, UTSA is delivering on that need.”

“Being involved in groups like CREW connects you with professionals in the local real estate industry. The college’s real estate program was vital to starting my career in real estate development.”

With more than 160 students, the college’s program was named after real estate icon **Walter M. Embrey Jr.** in 2015 following his \$1 million personal commitment to the program. He was also the inaugural chair of the Founders Council. Degree programs offered include a B.B.A. in Real Estate Finance and Development, a M.S. Finance degree with a real estate concentration and a graduate certificate in real estate finance and development.



COLLEGE EARNS AACSB REACCREDITATION

The Carlos Alvarez College of Business earned reaccreditation in business and accounting from AACSB International, the longest-serving global business accrediting agency. With only 926 accredited business schools and 189 accredited accounting programs, AACSB accreditation represents the highest standard of achievement for business schools worldwide.

“The renewal of our accreditation is a testament to the quality of our academic programs, faculty members and student success initiatives,” said **Pamela C. Smith**, associate dean of administration and faculty in the Alvarez College of Business. “Less than 5% of business schools attain this certification, solidifying our elite status in academia.”

“The AACSB reaccreditation affirms the dedicated commitment of the outstanding faculty of the Alvarez College of Business toward the success of our students, and the quality of the program that prepares those students to not only succeed, but to lead the way to a brighter future,” said **Kimberly Andrews Espy**, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. “I commend the faculty and staff for their hard work to secure this reaccreditation.”

Reviewers recognized the college for its exceptional commitment to student success, including a strong focus on Hispanic and first-generation students. Additionally, the college’s engagement with the business and alumni community through its advisory boards was cited as vital to fueling ongoing innovation.

Every five years accredited institutions undergo a rigorous review process that includes internal assessment, engagement with an AACSB-assigned mentor and peer-reviewed evaluations. Business schools develop a plan that aligns with AACSB’s accreditation standards that focus on excellence in areas relating to innovation, curriculum relevance and academic and professional engagement.

The college’s accounting program also went through a separate reaccreditation process. “AACSB accreditation further validates the college’s accounting programs,” said **Sharad Asthana**, chair of the Department of Accounting. “The committee commended our department for our faculty’s engagement with students, our Accounting Mentor Program, which pairs business students with mentors, and our Accounting Exchange Program, which brings students, faculty and accounting professionals together.”

The college has been continuously accredited by AACSB since 1980.



Nancy and Frank Kudla

KUDLAS DOUBLE COMMITMENT TO FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Nancy Kudla, MBA ’87 and her husband, **Frank**, ’85 generously committed \$700,000 to their existing fellowship, the Nancy and Frank Kudla Endowed Fellowship in Cybersecurity. Longtime supporters of UTSA and U.S. Air Force veterans, their gift doubles the size of their endowment.

They established their endowed fellowship in 2011 to support graduate student research and education in cyber security. Their latest gift was inspired by the matching gift challenge from the Carlos Alvarez College of Business, made possible by the contribution of **Carlos Alvarez**, UTSA Campaign Leadership Council co-chair.

“Helping as many students as possible is an exciting and achievable goal if we all work together,” said Nancy Kudla. “We hope that we inspire others to do the same. It’s not just a gift—it provides a long-term impact for students, UTSA and San Antonio.”

An Honor Graduate from the first female class at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Nancy went on to earn her MBA from UTSA. In addition to serving as a UTSA Campaign Leadership Council co-chair, Nancy is also the CEO for FNK Ventures. Frank earned his B.B.A. in finance from UTSA and is currently the president and COO for FNK Ventures, a commercial real estate company. Prior to establishing their current enterprise, the Kudlas co-founded and grew a successful IT company, dNovus RDI, which they sold in 2008.

The Kudlas hope to see more students participate in their fellowship over the years as their endowment continues to grow. They believe that these fellows will conduct meaningful work that will positively reflect San Antonio and UTSA.

“Cyber security is critical to our nation’s security, and we have great faith in UTSA’s ability to make an important impact through the research conducted by its talented students and faculty,” said Nancy Kudla. “With continued community support, we believe UTSA can become the nation’s top school for cyber security. Together we can make this bold goal a reality!”



LEUNG TO LEAD UNDER-GRADUATE STUDIES

Mark T. Leung

Mark T. Leung has been named associate dean of undergraduate studies in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business. Leung had served as the interim associate dean since 2021.

“There are few people as passionate about undergraduate students as Mark,” said **Jonathon Halbesleben**, dean of the Alvarez College of Business. “His tremendous energy coupled with his deep institutional knowledge will serve the college well as we focus on enhancing the success of all of our undergraduate students.”

Leung is responsible for managing the college’s undergraduate programs, which encompass more than 6,500 students and 14 majors. In addition, he oversees the college’s Student Success Center that is focused on academic excellence, experiential learning and professional development in a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment.

“Taking on this position is a major milestone in my personal advancement and career,” said Leung, professor of management science and statistics. “I look forward to inspiring my team to strive for excellence in supporting our students’ academic dreams.”

While serving as the interim associate dean for the past nine months, Leung was able to update policies to remove roadblocks in academic programs, streamline administrative processes and work with administrators and department chairs to enhance student learning.

Joining UTSA in 1999, Leung teaches in the areas of production and service operations, supply chain management and applied business analytics. Recognized for teaching and research excellence, he has received numerous awards and holds a Ph.D. in operations management from Indiana University.

One priority for Leung this year is to work to enhance the connection between academic departments and academic support units to better serve business students.

“My goal is to enrich our students’ academic journey at UTSA and elevate the Alvarez College of Business’ success through our four pillars of engagement: research and innovation, professional development and leadership, service and community learning and global and intercultural fluency,” said Leung. “Our academic programs coupled with our experiential learning opportunities make our graduates invaluable contributors in the workplace and within society.”



“I’m so grateful for this opportunity... I look forward to growing my leadership experience.”

WU APPOINTED CHAIR OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCE & STATISTICS DEPARTMENT

Wenbo Wu has been named chair of the Department of Management Science and Statistics in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business. He had served as interim chair of the department since fall 2021.

“Wenbo is an excellent addition to our college’s leadership team,” said **Jonathon Halbesleben**, dean of the Alvarez College of Business. “His entrepreneurial vision for the department is critical during this time as we forge new connections with UTSA’s School of Data Science. I look forward to seeing the department thrive under his leadership.”

Wu, who has been at UTSA since 2018, is an active researcher in the field of statistics and data science. His research interests include high-dimensional data modeling and inference, dimension reduction, variable selection and causal inference. He is also collaborative, working with researchers in disciplines such as finance, marketing, engineering and computer science. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia.

“I’m so grateful for this opportunity,” said Wu, who is also the Graham Weston Endowed Professor. “The leadership in the college as well as my faculty colleagues have been incredibly supportive. I look forward to growing my administrative leadership experience, making impactful decisions and working more closely with colleagues both in my department as well as within the college.”

Wu’s plans include creating new degree programs for the department; working closely with the college’s Student Success Center to prepare students to become competitive business professionals through professional development and experiential learning programs; and strengthening connections with industry partners.

The Department of Management Science and Statistics is home to over 400 students and 20 full-time faculty members. The department, which supports the college’s applied quantitative academic focus, offers four undergraduate programs: a B.B.A. in actuarial science, a B.B.A. in business analytics, a B.B.A. in operations and supply chain management and a B.S. in statistics and data science. At the graduate level, course offerings include a M.S. in statistics and data science and a Ph.D. in applied statistics.

CANNON AND KEATING NAMED DISTINGUISHED TEACHING PROFESSORS



Tom Cannon



Jerry Keating

Faculty members Tom Cannon and Jerry Keating are the first of 19 faculty members at UTSA who have been named Distinguished Teaching Professors. The honorific title is held for five years and reserved for members of the UTSA Academy of Distinguished Teaching Scholars.

“Congratulations to the outstanding group of faculty members chosen for this honor,” said **Kimberly Andrews Espy**, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. “The UTSA faculty is second to none, and this new honorific title is one more way to commend our faculty and recognize their steadfast dedication to teaching excellence and innovative practices that directly contribute to our students’ success.”

Cannon, professor of practice in marketing, has consistently received high student evaluations that have resulted in numerous teaching awards including the coveted University of Texas Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award; President’s Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence; and Dean’s Teaching Excellence Award.

Teaching at UTSA since 1981, Keating is the Peter T. Flawn Professor of Management Science and Statistics. He has received numerous honors for teaching including the President’s Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching Excellence in 1989 and 2001; and the Chancellor’s Council Teaching Award for excellence in teaching undergraduates in 1995 and 2001.

New FACULTY



John Newsom
Assistant Professor of Practice in Information Systems and Cyber Security
Master of Science in Information Technology UTSA



Viviana Rodriguez
Assistant Professor of Economics
Ph.D. Columbia University



Bulent Temel
Assistant Professor of Practice in Economics
Ph.D. Atılım University



Nishant Vishwamitra
Assistant Professor of Information Systems and Cyber Security
Ph.D. University at Buffalo



Wenjing Yao
Assistant Professor of Practice in Management Science and Statistics
Ph.D. University of Georgia



Yuexia Zhang
Assistant Professor of Management Science and Statistics
Ph.D. Fudan University

COLLEGE NAMES FACULTY LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

The college has appointed four faculty to serve as leadership fellows for the 2022-2023 academic year.

David Han, associate professor of management science and statistics, and **Harrison Liu**, associate professor of accounting, will work with **Juan Manuel Sanchez**, associate dean of graduate studies and research, on projects for the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

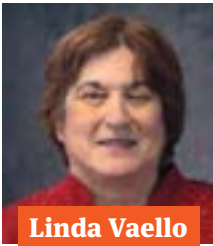
Han will analyze research efforts of peer business schools, encourage faculty to engage in externally-sponsored research and assist with graduate programming in support of doctoral, master's and undergraduate research. Liu will research how the college's graduate programs support students financially and logistically behind the scenes and support new and



David Han



Harrison Liu



Linda Vaello



Marco Villarreal

existing initiatives in the college to improve and expand graduate studies.

Linda Vaello, assistant professor of practice in accounting, and **Marco Villarreal**, associate professor of practice in information systems and cyber security, will work with **Mark T. Leung**, associate dean for undergraduate studies, on undergraduate and student success initiatives.

"I am looking forward to working with the fellows to explore opportunities and support the learning experience for everyone involved," said Leung. "The fellows can use this experience to advance their careers and support their respective departments."

Vaello will work with the Alvarez Student

Success Center to help raise the profile of their programs and services that support student success. Villarreal will focus his efforts on the undergraduate core curriculum as well as initiatives to improve retention and graduation rates.

The Faculty Leadership Fellows program was created to provide faculty members with leadership opportunities and to help develop the next generation of college leaders. With an emphasis on mentorship, shadowing and one-on-one training, the fellowship is personalized to meet the needs and professional goals of each individual faculty member who participates in the program.



H. Raghav Rao

RAO SELECTED TO BECOME AN AIS FELLOW

A leader in the field of information systems, **H. Raghav Rao**, the AT&T Distinguished Chair in Infrastructure Assurance and Security in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business, was named a fellow of the Association for Information Systems (AIS).

"I am humbled and enthralled to receive this award," said Rao. "Being recognized by this elite body is an honor for me."

The AIS Fellow Award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the information systems discipline in terms of research, teaching and service both locally, regionally and globally.

Joining UTSA in 2016, Rao is a renowned researcher and scholar. His research interests broadly fall under the umbrella of information assurance and cover such topics as cyber security, digital resilience and disaster management.

Rao has authored or co-authored more than 250 technical papers, of which more than 180 are published in archival journals. His most recent research has focused on health-related misinformation and the adoption of mobile payment systems.

"We've been looking at how people perceive harm from health-related misinformation," said Rao, who has published work on this topic with his doctoral students and colleagues. "How does it affect individuals, and what happens due to the corrective actions?"

Rao is co-editor in chief of *Information Systems Frontiers*, advisory editor of *Decision Support Systems*, associate editor of *ACM TMIS* and senior editor at *MIS Quarterly*. In 2019 he was inducted into the UTSA Academy of Distinguished Researchers.

"I think my service contributions were as critical to this award as my scholarship," said Rao, who founded the AT&T Distinguished Speaker Series in the Alvarez College of Business.

Rao was also named a recipient of the Fulbright U.S. Scholar award. He spent last summer at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore in Bangalore, India, one of the top three management schools in the country. He will return in summer 2023 to complete his term.

Prestigious and competitive, the Fulbright U.S. Scholar program, which is overseen by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, allows American faculty, as well as artists and professionals, the opportunity to teach, conduct research and lead related professional projects in over 130 countries.

Faculty ACCOLADES

TENURE AND PROMOTION

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE

Glenn Brown
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Terri Davis
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE

William Pugh
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Marco Villarreal
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Catalina Zarate
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

PROFESSOR OF PRACTICE

Rita Mitra
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Mark Phillips
Department of Management

TENURED ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Elias Bou-Harb
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Richard Gretz
Department of Marketing

**Yuanxiong
(Richard) Guo**
Department of Information
Systems and Cyber Security

Ashwin Malshe
Department of Marketing

Juan Mao
Department of Accounting

FULL PROFESSOR

Jonathan Clark
Department of Management

COLLEGE AWARD WINNERS

David Han
Associate Professor of Management
Science and Statistics
E. Lou Curry Teaching
Excellence Award

Amir Karimi
Assistant Professor of Management
Science and Statistics
Endowed 1969 Commemorative
Award for Teaching Excellence

Yvette Sands
Assistant Professor of Practice
in Information Systems and
Cyber Security
Endowed 1969 Commemorative
Award for Teaching Excellence

Stewart Miller
Professor of Management
Col. Jean Piccione and Lt.
Col. Philip Piccione Endowed
Research Award

Richard Gretz
Associate Professor of Marketing
Col. Jean Piccione and Lt.
Col. Philip Piccione Endowed
Research Award

Deepa Chandrasekaran
Associate Professor of Marketing
Patrick J. Clynes Endowed
College of Business Excellence
in Service Award

Ron Sweet
Associate Professor of
Practice in Finance
Dean's Excellence in
Service Faculty Award

Raymond Choo
Cloud Technology Endowed
Professor in Information Systems
and Cyber Security
Endowed 1969 Commemorative
Faculty Award for Overall
Faculty Excellence

COLLEGE LAUNCHES STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

The Carlos Alvarez College of Business launched a new Student Success Center to enhance support services for business students. The center combines already successful programming in the college to provide a one-stop resource center for business students to achieve their academic, personal and professional goals.

“We are excited to launch this new center in the Alvarez College of Business that will provide invaluable resources for our business students,” said **Mark T. Leung**, associate dean of undergraduate studies in the Alvarez College of Business. “This collaborative center allows us to connect with our students throughout their academic journey in support of UTSA’s classroom to career initiative.”

As part of UTSA’s new Academic Success District, the Alvarez Student Success Center offers tutoring, professional development workshops, experiential learning programs, leadership and academic programs as well as career services for undergraduate and graduate business students.

“Student success has always been a priority in the Alvarez College of Business, but now it has a collaborative home,” said **Rosa Garza-Girdy**, assistant dean of undergraduate studies. “We’ve combined several successful college resources and strategically located the center in the main corridor of the Business Building to enhance accessibility for our students.”

Student Success Center Programming

- Academic support programs such as live and on-demand tutoring, review sessions and study groups
- Business Honors program for high-achieving students
- Career and professional development services, which previously had been provided by the Center for Student Professional Development, are part of the new success center. This includes the Career Action Program, job search workshops, networking events with corporate partners and one-on-one counseling in support of securing internships and full-time job opportunities.
- Experiential learning programs such as global and cultural experiences, international immersions and speaker series
- Leadership development opportunities through seminars and business student organizations
- Student life programming such as new student orientation, well-being services, Roadrunner Days and community service activities

BUSINESS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL INNOVATION EXPERIENCE

Twelve Carlos Alvarez College of Business students embarked on a journey 4,973 miles away for an experience of a lifetime. They participated in a Global Business Trek to Porto, Portugal hosted by the European Innovation Academy this past summer.



Business students Andrea Garcia and Jose Juan Gonzalez won awards for their team’s participation in the program.

“I wholeheartedly recommend immersion programs to all students. If you are on the fence about trying it out—do it.”

The three-week accelerated learning opportunity included 500 students from over 80 countries. Teams comprised of five students of different backgrounds of study came together to experience the real-life process of building a startup company with the guidance of mentors from companies such as Google, Uber and Amazon.

Student participants were **Anik Banerjee, Tyler Davis, Andrea Garcia, JJ Gonzalez, Bryan Gonzalez-Gonzalez, Sarai Llamas, Alejandro Mansbach, Keren Mansbach, Claudia Morales, Graciela Orta, Ariana Santeliz** and **Kara Ward**.

Alexander Lewis, assistant professor of management, led the group through 10-hour workdays to complete their business ventures. “The European Innovation Academy is an extremely well-designed program, and there is fantastic energy to it. It was great to see the students so excited and then so focused as they worked to bring their business ideas to fruition by the end of the third week,” Lewis commented.

For many of the students, it was their first time working in a high-pressure environment and their first time ever leaving the country, allowing an abundance of growth to transpire. With just three weeks to navigate communication, time management, define team roles and compose a master startup plan, the students experienced both great successes and failures.

“This experience has motivated me so much that I have decided to consider living and working in the European Union in the future. Not only did my team accomplish the goal of creating a startup idea from scratch with very limited time, but we also had an actual social media platform, a website and hundreds of users. It was interesting using my financial expertise to help any way that I could,” stated **Alejandro Mansbach**, a graduate student in the M.S. in finance program.

The seemingly impossible became possible as our Roadrunners adapted to the Portuguese culture, universal business methods, language barriers and differing lifestyles. Though the U.S. is culturally diverse, culture looks much different when experienced outside of our borders.

Experiencing this firsthand was M.S. in business student, **Sarai Llamas**. “I had to get out of my comfort zone, adapt and understand new dynamics. How I approached problem-solving looked different. Taking my education abroad developed my global perspective and encouraged me to continue seeking more opportunities to cultivate that. I wholeheartedly recommend immersion programs to all students. If you are on the fence about trying it out—do it.”



UNDERGRADUATES WIN SOUTHWEST REGIONALS OF THE CFA INSTITUTE RESEARCH CHALLENGE

A team of undergraduates won the Southwest Regionals of the CFA Institute Research Challenge last spring, beating out 20 teams from leading business schools in Texas and Louisiana. This is the first time that a UTSA team has won this competition.

Team members were **Eduardo Gallegos**, a senior finance major; **Colin Johnson**, a junior mathematics major; **Sergio Terrazas**, '21, a finance graduate; **William Resendez**, a senior finance major; and **Bond Wickwire**, '21, a finance graduate.

The global equity research competition provides students with mentoring and real-world experience in financial analysis. The teams conducted an in-depth analysis on a designated publicly-traded company; received mentoring from a faculty advisor and industry mentor; prepared a written report on that company that included a buy, sell or hold recommendation; and presented and defended their findings to a panel of industry experts. Winners were selected based on the thoroughness of the analysis and company knowledge.

"This team was chosen based on their classroom performance as well as their participation in the Investment Society," said **Ron Sweet**, MBA '91, associate professor of practice in finance in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business and advisor to the Investment Society. "I knew they were all strong writers and presenters, and they would work well together."

Putting in over 200 hours to complete the challenge, the group began working on the project over the holiday break and continued their analysis last spring. "The week before our presentation we worked every night to perfect it," said Gallegos, who conducted industry research on their environmental company.

"We knew it was going to be challenging, but this is what you do in the real world, and we knew we'd make a great team," said Terrazas, who is a financial analyst with Dell.

The first round of the competition required a 10-page paper. The second round included a 10-minute presentation, and for the final round the team submitted a recorded presentation. "We wanted to tell a story and make our case simple and clear," said Wickwire, who is a financial analyst at Buckle.

"As a rising college and new Tier One university, our win helps put UTSA on the map," said Resendez, who interned with Victory Capital this summer. "I was able to apply what I've learned in my business classes to the report."

In addition to the experiential learning opportunity, the competition also gave

students exposure to finance executives through the CFA. The team was mentored by **Ryan Griffin** from Southern Wealth Management. "It was a great networking opportunity," said Johnson, a member of the Honors College. "It signals to employers that you can work as a team."

"UTSA students have excelled in this competition because they've gained experience with this type of analysis as part of my Security Analysis class as well as through their participation in the college's Investment Society," said Sweet, who was the faculty mentor to the team. "Knowing a process and having practiced going through it multiple times with actual company data allows our students to jump into a project like this with great confidence."

"It was awesome to see the power of five undergraduates coming together to accomplish a goal," said Wickwire. "And, even better, we remained friends through it all."

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SAN FRANCISCO DOMESTIC IMMERSION



A group of 25 Carlos Alvarez College of Business students traveled to San Francisco this summer to participate in a domestic immersion hosted by the college's Alvarez Student Success Center. During the four-day trip, students networked with leading companies, engaged with professionals and college alumni and immersed themselves in the city's culture.

With the college's travel programs put on hold because of the pandemic, the domestic immersion program was created to allow students to experience a variety of business environments around the United States. Advancing the university's classroom to career initiative, the college's global immersion programs and treks provide students with valuable experiential learning opportunities.

"Domestic and international immersion programs allow students to build business proficiencies from a cultural and geographical standpoint," said **Krishna Garza-Baker**, assistant director of experiential learning programs. "These types of programs are valuable because students can develop business connections and relationships that will benefit them professionally and personally."

The San Francisco trek included corporate visits to Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo and the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development as well as cultural visits to the German Consulate and Alcatraz.

Mexico native **Joana Gallardo's** most significant takeaway from the trip was the opportunity to engage in career exploration. As vice president of membership for Beta Alpha Psi, an accounting honor society, Gallardo has participated in professional development activities, but learned more about potential career paths during the trip.

"The experience was valuable because it opened my eyes to career possibilities," Gallardo said. "The visit to the German Consulate was one of my favorite moments because it helped me realize that there are professional opportunities in my field beyond public accounting."

"Our business alumni were integral in helping us plan this experience," said Garza-Baker. Advisory Council member **Jordan**

Walder, '84, managing director at Wells Fargo in Los Angeles, California, utilized his connections within the company to help organize the students' San Francisco Wells Fargo office tour.

"I was pleased to coordinate a tour for some of the best and brightest UTSA's business school has to offer," said Walder. "Internal feedback on the tour was overwhelmingly positive. The students were fully engaged and asked great questions. More broadly, while UTSA has historically not been a target recruiting school for Wells Fargo, I hope this event put UTSA on the map, and that it will lead to UTSA gaining greater exposure in our recruitment efforts. I also hope that the tour generated interest in the banking space, and particularly Wells Fargo, and that it will result in some good internship candidate conversions!"

In addition to the tours and cultural visits, the students participated in a networking mixer with UTSA alumni in the San Francisco area.

"I enjoyed mingling with the students," said **Robin Fernandez**, '11, reality labs accounting manager at Meta. "Thanks to UTSA, I had opportunities that I never dreamt of, which is why I think it's important for me to give back. It was great to be a part of this experience designed to help students take the next step into the workforce after college."

Kwadwo Sam, a senior accounting major, expanded his knowledge of San Francisco business operations and the city's culture as part of the experience. His desire to participate in experiential learning experiences motivated him to apply for the domestic immersion.

"This was my first time traveling within the United States and visiting San Francisco," said Sam. "I enjoyed the city tour, learning about business relations at the German Consulate and connecting with professionals. The program allowed me to set more career goals and improved my industry knowledge."

While each student had unique takeaways, collectively they valued the chance to interact with their peers, build business connections as well as lifelong friendships.



CYBER TEAM PLACES THIRD IN REGIONAL COMPETITION

CCDC is one of the most prominent cyber security defense competitions in the nation. Requiring students to display both technical and business skills, the competition provides a controlled, competitive environment to assess the students' depth of understanding and operational competency in managing the challenges of protecting a corporate network infrastructure.

"I think our team did really well, especially considering that they only had one person who participated in last year's competition," said **Ben Anderson**, associate professor of practice in information systems and cyber security in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business and head coach. "These types of competitions reveal how people respond when you turn up the heat. Our team excelled in their communication and cooperative spirit."

The eight-person team was tasked with maintaining critical technology services, responding to business tasks from fictional corporate leaders and protecting the network from attacks from a team of professional hackers.

Team members were **Timothy Avram**, a cyber security major; **Alex Bryant**, a computer science major; **Mason Eckenrod**, a computer science major; **Dylan Gonzales**, a computer science major; **Henry Graham**, a cyber security major; **Joshua Gutierrez**, a cyber security major; **Ryan Longoria**, a computer science major; and **Jacob Rahimi**, a computer science major. The team was also mentored by assistant coaches **Jose Mireles** and **John Newsom**, who are both faculty in information systems and cyber security in the Alvarez College of Business.

"This competition is an amazing way to gain hands-on experience in cyber defense in a controlled environment," said

A team of UTSA students placed third in the Southwest Regional Collegiate Cyber Defense Competition (CCDC) held in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Graham, the team captain. "The faculty coaches were instrumental in helping us prepare. All the hours spent preparing paid off. It was incredibly fun."

Leveraging their experience this year, Graham and his team are already preparing for next year's competition. They plan to continue training and building a wider knowledge base of their technology expertise to improve in areas where they had deficiencies.

"These types of competitions test your ability to respond to realistic events, both in terms of hands-on experience as well as reporting," said Rahimi. "It allows you to get a taste of the skills necessary in this industry. And you're able to learn content that you wouldn't be able to learn in a classroom environment due to time or resource constraints."

Participation in competitions like this wouldn't be possible without the support of corporate donors. This year's team was sponsored by UTSA cyber team supporters EY, H-E-B, Home Depot and Northrop Grumman.

Future plans include expanding participation in cyber competitions and developing a robust program to train and nurture students for these national competitions.

"Students learn to think on their feet and make invaluable industry connections by participating in these types of competitions," said Anderson. "Our goal is to build on this win and to grow the depth and knowledge of our student competition teams."



A LEADER'S JOURNEY

BY WENDY FROST

Leaders are defined by the experiences that have shaped their lives. This holds true for **Jonathon Halbesleben** who embarked on a new academic journey as the seventh dean of the Carlos Alvarez College of Business in June 2022.

A first-generation college student, he credits his success to those who were willing to give him an opportunity to succeed throughout his career. "For that reason, I'm passionate about making sure others have those same opportunities," said Halbesleben, who is the first UTSA dean to hold two chaired appointments as both the

Bodenstedt Chair for the Dean of Business and the Tom C. Frost Distinguished University Chair for Business Excellence.

Halbesleben wasn't looking for a new job when he was first contacted about the opening at UTSA. But upon reading the job description, he was drawn to UTSA's mission to serve underserved communities. "My passion for leveraging the power of higher education to transform underserved communities fit well with their goals," he said.

"I could tell there was a strong foundation in place," he said. "But I saw an enormous opportunity to help other students reach their potential as well. I am thrilled to join with Alvarez College of Business faculty, staff and students to build on that foundation to create an internationally-recognized college that is ambitious, bold and dynamic."



Dean Halbesleben visits with college benefactor Carlos Alvarez.

Alvarez College of Business Strategic Priorities



STUDENT SUCCESS



RESEARCH IMPACT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

“We are so happy to have Dean Halbesleben charging into his role to articulate and implement an updated academic plan for the Alvarez College of Business that advances a culture of excellence and collaboration, the workforce needs of the regional and local business community and the success of our students,” said **Kimberly Andrews Espy**, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs.

“It’s particularly exciting to join the college at this pivotal point in its trajectory. The Alvarezes’ support is transformational and provides us sustainable resources to progress toward our broader goals as an urban-serving, Hispanic-thriving discovery enterprise,” said Halbesleben.

With a demonstrated record of leading complex educational enterprises, Halbesleben guides a business school that encompasses almost 8,000 students, 30 academic degree programs and 190 faculty and staff. Forty-five percent of business students are the first in their families to attend college.

“I recognize the enormous responsibility I have been entrusted with in this role,” said Halbesleben. “With the momentum that has been growing under President Eighmy and Provost Espy, I want the Alvarez College of Business to lead the way in delivering on their ambitious strategic plans.”

Spending his first six months learning about the college, the needs of the students as well as the expectations of the business community allowed Halbesleben to solidify his plans for the college.

His vision is that the Alvarez College of Business will become a business school that others seek to emulate. And, one that the college’s stakeholders are proud to contribute to because the college is changing the world through its students, research and relationships with the business community.

Strategic Priorities

Halbesleben has identified three areas of priority within the college: student success, research impact and community engagement.

“We know that well-designed student success initiatives help all students, but they have a greater impact on members of under-represented communities,” he said. “By enhancing our professional development and experiential learning programs, we can ensure that our students are well-served and make an immediate impact in their careers. Their careers start the moment they walk in the door at the Alvarez College of Business, not when they leave.”

In regards to research impact, Halbesleben will work with faculty to increase research productivity, expand doctoral program enrollments in the college and increase sponsored research grant activity.



“Our faculty, who have consistently been ranked in the top 100 of business schools nationwide, are conducting research that is changing the way we think about business,” he said. “Working together, we are poised to transform the San Antonio business community.”

Finally, Halbesleben stresses that building connections with the business community will be a priority that he takes immediate action on. “The starting point will be meeting with as many people as possible, listening to their needs and helping build connections between our programs and those needs. We’ll not only focus on developing workforce-ready skills, but also help entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses.”

In addition to his administrative duties at UTSA, Halbesleben serves as professor of management. An active researcher, he has written or edited 17 books and published over 95 peer-reviewed journal articles on topics such as employee well-being, work-family issues and relationships in and out of the workplace.

His research has been funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Department of Defense, among others. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

Prior to joining UTSA, Halbesleben served in administrative positions at the University of Alabama, first as senior associate dean and Russell Professor of Business Administration in the Culverhouse College of Business and then as dean of the College of Continuing Studies.

Before joining Alabama, he held faculty positions at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and the University of Missouri. Halbesleben earned his Ph.D. and M.S. in industrial/organizational psychology from the University of Oklahoma and a bachelor’s degree from Winona State University.



Dean Halbesleben meets with faculty members (left to right) Richard Gretz and Juan Manuel Sanchez.

“

Our faculty, who have consistently been ranked in the top 100 of business schools nationwide, are conducting research that is changing the way we think about business. Working together, we are poised to transform the San Antonio business community.

”

Blessed by the opportunities that have led him to the Alvarez College of Business, Halbesleben is looking forward to being able to leverage his role with the college to give back to Alvarez business students whose backgrounds are similar to his own. “My hope is always to contribute to something bigger than myself for the good of others. I’m grateful to have that opportunity here at the Alvarez College of Business,” he concluded.

THIBODEAUX NAMED ACCOUNTING ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Susan Thibodeaux, '85 was named the 2022 Accounting Alumnus of the Year in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business. Thibodeaux is a managing director in EY's Oil and Gas Center in Houston.

With an illustrious career as a tax professional in public accounting, she worked at both KPMG and Arthur Andersen before joining EY in 1998. In her role at EY, she interacts closely with clients on planning, provisions, forecasts, tax returns and income tax audits and spends a significant amount of time on training and teaching internal and external courses and conferences.

Despite her longstanding career in accounting, Thibodeaux began her studies at UTSA focused on something else—computers. Realizing that she would rather use computers than program them, she entered the college's data systems program that was offered at that time. While taking an intermediate accounting course she soon discovered that while others struggled trying to understand the subject, it came naturally for her.

"I saw it as a sign that I should focus on accounting," said Thibodeaux, who serves on EY's national oil and gas tax team. "I chose to concentrate in tax because I like solving problems." Thirty years later, it's clear that was the right path for her.

An Army brat, Thibodeaux attended UTSA because she wanted to live in San Antonio with her father. While a student she became a charter member of Beta Alpha Psi, an accounting honor society, and participated in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. Graduating with a B.B.A. with concentrations in both accounting and data systems, she credits UTSA with helping launch her career.

"I'm forever grateful to UTSA's Career Center for lining up interviews that enabled me to land my first job," she said. "UTSA opened doors that I would have had to beat down myself."

Reengaging again with UTSA, she met with accounting business students and was inspired to start her own accounting scholarship to give back to students in need, something that she knows about firsthand. Working 30 hours a week, she was thankful for the scholarship support that she received as a student.

"It's amazing to get to see the students, and how energized and excited they are to be in school," she said. "They are all hard workers. Most of them have jobs in addition to their schoolwork, and they are very involved in activities. It is inspiring to see their drive."

In addition to her UTSA degree, Thibodeaux also earned a master's in science degree in accounting with a focus on taxation from Texas A&M University. Active professionally and personally, she is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and the Texas Society



of CPAs. She also volunteers with her church as well as with local elementary schools.

"Throughout my career I've had the opportunity to work with really smart colleagues," said Thibodeaux. "Being able to work with the best and the brightest at top firms has been amazing. The relationships you build with your coworkers and clients are invaluable."

Since entering the field in 1985, Thibodeaux has witnessed enormous change in the accounting industry. "Computers have revolutionized the industry," she said. "We all have online research tools that we use now, so research is easier. Also, the way that we receive information electronically from clients has removed the tedious nature of data entry."

She also found that the world has become smaller now, and worldwide she can connect with individuals using technology to share ideas and ask questions.

Upon receiving her award, Thibodeaux shared some advice with incoming graduate accounting students on how to succeed in the field of accounting. She encouraged students to network, to give their best to every project, to toot their own horn and to treat their career like a marathon, not a sprint.

"If you don't say no once in a while, you're going to burn yourself out," she said. "I wish I would have learned earlier in my career that it is okay to say no in the right way."

Reflecting on her career as she approaches retirement, Thibodeaux recognizes the value of her UTSA education. "I would stack up my education at UTSA against any of the big schools. We had smaller classes, and we received more attention from the professors who were actively involved in our education. They pushed us, and I felt well prepared when I entered the workforce."

The Outstanding Accounting Alumnus of the Year Award recognizes the accomplishments of UTSA accounting alumni. Selected by faculty and their peers, honorees are chosen for not only their professional accomplishments, but also their commitment and continued support to the department, college and university.



GEORGE FINDS FULFILLMENT IN FINANCE

Following the road less traveled came naturally for business alumnus Jeff George, MACY '10. By taking the advice of poet Robert Frost, George has been able to find fulfillment both professionally in the field of finance and academically while he was a student in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business.

As the founder of Tao Financial, a financial advisory firm in Orlando, George's career has been defined by his staunch ethical beliefs as well as his passion for helping entrepreneurs.

Before launching his own firm, George felt that his ethical values were slowly being eroded. "Every firm I worked for focused on the bottom line, but not the bottom line of their clients. The pandemic presented an opportunity for me to build my own firm," he said.

His firm, which he opened in 2020, specializes in financial planning, investment management, group retirement plan design and investment advisory services for small business owners. He leverages his background in accounting to help owners take the next steps in growing their business and managing value.

To accomplish this, he formed a second company, Tao Consulting LLC, where he serves as a part-time CFO for business owners who need help making important financial decisions.

"I saw the difference between the services that institutional clients and retail clients received when it came to investing," he said. "And that gap was even more massive between big corporations and small- to medium-sized entrepreneurs."

George's passion for helping small business owners was fueled by personal experience. He saw the frustrations that his dad faced managing his dental practice, and he knew that small businesses should have access to the same high-quality services that are provided to larger corporate clients.

"I'd like to see a lot more small businesses prospering," he said. "It was apparent to

me that we as an industry could be doing more to support small businesses. Given the skill set that I had I knew that I could make a difference."

Ironically, business was not his first love. A San Antonio native, he dreamed of studying philosophy, but made a practical choice to pursue accounting. Completing both his undergraduate and graduate degree in accounting in four years, he forged a unique academic path that allowed him to create a degree plan that gave him the foundational skills that have made him successful today.

"I had an amazing roster of accounting professors. It has provided a foundation for me to build on all sorts of financial knowledge," said George, who was active with Beta Alpha Psi and ALPFA as a student.

While he was an accounting student, George challenged himself academically by focusing his electives on financial topics such as modeling and business valuation and pursuing independent study coursework with faculty members **Jeff Boone** and **Ron Sweet**.

"Linda Vaello had a big influence on me," said George. "I had her for both of my Principles of Accounting classes as well as my ethics course. She was fabulous."

"There is no way I would have gotten a better education going anywhere else," he said. "You get this belief that if you go to an Ivy League or private school that you'll receive a better education. The program matters far less than the people managing it do. The faculty at UTSA were wonderful."

Participating in a national accounting case competition while a student, George had the opportunity to interview with JPMorgan Investment Bank. Realizing that

the traditional accounting paths weren't something that he wanted to pursue, he accepted an offer with the firm as an investment banking analyst in Philadelphia.

After completing their two-and-a-half-year analyst development program, he chose to follow his girlfriend (now wife) to Florida to continue his investment career.

During that time, George completed the exams to become a CFA Charterholder and worked for one of the largest institutional investment consulting firms in Central Florida. He specialized in managing investments for executive deferred compensation, 401(k) and defined benefit pension plans.

"It was a great experience, and the knowledge I accumulated made it clear how much was being left on the table when it came to offering quality investment advice and retirement savings strategies for small business owners," he said.

After eight years with the company, he had developed over 100 corporate relationships and was managing over \$2 billion in assets. Between leaving and opening his own firm, George also worked with a financial advisory firm that focused on financial planning for individuals.

George encourages students to complete internships at both large and small firms, so they can get a feel for the differences in culture and learn what works best for them.

"The greater one's aspirations, the more you have to be willing to sacrifice," said George.

George has done just that as he boldly pursues his passions while remaining true to himself.

BOU-HARB EXPOSES VULNERABILITIES IN ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

As the number of electric cars on the road grows, so does the need for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and the Internet-based managing systems within those stations. However, these managing systems face their own issues: cyber security attacks.

Elias Bou-Harb, associate professor of information systems and cyber security, and his colleagues are shedding light on the vulnerabilities of these cyber systems.

The systems built into electric cars perform critical duties over the Internet, including remote monitoring and customer billing, as do a growing number of internet-enabled EV charging stations.

Bou-Harb and his fellow researchers wanted to explore the real-life implications of cyberattacks against EV charging systems and how to utilize cyber security countermeasures to mitigate them.

“Electrical vehicles are the norm nowadays. However, their management stations are susceptible to security exploitations,” said Bou-Harb, who is the director of the UTSA Cyber Center for Security and Analytics. “In this work, we endeavored to uncover their related security weaknesses and understand their consequences on electrical vehicles and the smart grid while providing recommendations and sharing our findings with relevant industry for proactive security remediation.”

The team identified 16 electrical vehicle charging managing systems, which they divided into separate categories such as

firmware, mobile and web apps. They performed an in-depth security analysis on each one.

“We devised a system lookup and collection approach to identify a large number of electrical vehicle charging systems, then leveraged reverse engineering and white-/black-box web application penetration testing techniques to perform a thorough vulnerability analysis,” Bou-Harb said.

The team discovered a range of vulnerabilities among the 16 systems and highlighted the 13 most severe vulnerabilities such as missing authentication and cross-site scripting. By exploiting these vulnerabilities, attackers can cause several issues, including manipulating the firmware or disguising themselves as actual users and accessing user data.

During this project, the team developed several security measures, guidelines and best practices for developers to mitigate cyberattacks. They also created countermeasures to patch each individual vulnerability they found.

The researchers plan to continue analyzing more charging stations to further understand their security posture. They are also working with several industry partners to help shape new security products from the design phase and to develop security resiliency measures that protect vulnerable charging stations from exploitation.



ROY UTILIZES ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO TRACK CANCER TUMOR SHRINKAGE

Arkajyoti Roy, assistant professor of management science and statistics in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business, is leading a first-of-its-kind study working with colleagues at UT Health San Antonio to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to track cancer tumor shrinkage in patients who receive radiotherapy.

Many studies have shown there is significant tumor shrinkage during radiotherapy. When patients receive radiation treatments, however, doctors typically ignore tumor volume changes, and they deliver the same radiation dose repeatedly during a five-to-seven-week treatment.

The team’s study, titled “Managing Tumor Changes During Radiotherapy Using a Deep Learning Model,” was published in the *Medical Physics* journal.

The team’s research revealed a better option. It demonstrated that it is possible to accurately predict tumor shrinkage and include those tumor changes in radiation treatment plans. This approach can reduce toxicity to surrounding organs and healthy tissue and ultimately improve the patient’s quality of life.

“With improvements in imaging technologies, we are able to gather higher resolution patient data during cancer radiation treatments. Combined with novel AI algorithms, we developed predictive and prescriptive models that can predict a patient’s

anatomy in the future, and more importantly, design adaptive radiotherapy plans in anticipation of the changes,” said Roy.

A significant concern for experts is tracking the tumor shrinkage in lungs during radiotherapy. Using the weekly scans of 16 lung cases, the researchers used AI algorithms to identify the changes in the characteristics in the patient’s anatomy that allowed for the prediction of future tumor shape and size on new patients.

With these AI predictions in hand, the researchers optimized future treatment plans by maximizing the radiation dose coverage in the predicted tumors while minimizing radiation exposure to surrounding organs and healthy tissue.

The results showed that using the deep learning model allowed doctors to significantly reduce the therapy dose and still maintain tumor coverage—a great improvement to current clinical practice.

The research team is now developing an improved AI-based adaptive model to better predict changes in the tumor shape and size to offer medical providers with valuable historical data that will further benefit treatment protocols for patients.

“Our goal is to merge both worlds, the AI predictions and optimization in one model to improve the radiation treatments implemented in the clinic,” Roy concluded.

RIOS RECEIVES NSF GRANT TO STUDY NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING

Anthony Rios, assistant professor of information systems and cyber security in the Carlos Alvarez College of Business, received a \$550,000 National Science Foundation CAREER award to study natural language processing (NLP) within artificial intelligence.

Rios, who also serves as associate director of the Cyber Center for Security and Analytics at UTSA, will apply the grant funding to develop frameworks for practitioners to develop population-specific NLP models.

NLP is a branch of artificial intelligence that enables computers to understand and interpret human language. It is used in everyday applications such as Google Translate and Amazon Alexa. Most research focuses on generalizing or assuming a one-size-fits-all language framework. This proposal takes a different approach by developing models tailored to specific geographic populations, ethnic communities or groups.

Rios's background and multidisciplinary research interests in NLP, machine learning and computational social science have equipped him with the expertise to lead this project. He received his first introduction to NLP during his computer science doctoral program at the University of Kentucky while working with his faculty advisor **Ramakanth Kavuluru**, an experienced NLP researcher. Rios was drawn to the subject due to its numerous applications and its impact on people and communication.

"NLP is about developing tools to understand language, but we do not have language without people," explained Rios, who joined UTSA in 2018. "My specific focus is developing NLP tools for biomedical and social applications, which I feel can have a real-world impact and hopefully improve people's lives."

The grant-funded project involves three objectives. First, it will determine methods to detect correlations between community language and NLP model performance. The second objective includes developing a tool to assist community leaders with determining potential harms of specific NLP models and deciding whether it is relevant to the community. Lastly, the project aims to find processes and opportunities to improve NLP model performance.

"I'm interested in understanding how these models can impact people, and what biases exist within them," Rios said. "There is a lot of hype surrounding NLP and artificial intelligence, but I think it's important to avoid hype and to understand the potential harms caused by NLP models when they are deployed."



Anthony Rios

“
NLP is about developing tools to understand language, but we do not have language without people. My specific focus is developing NLP tools for biomedical and social applications, which I feel can have a real-world impact and hopefully improve people's lives.”

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